

Testifier: Frank Fulchiero
Bill Number: SB 278

Hello, my name is Frank Fulchiero. Thank you for your time.
I am speaking in favor of Senate Bill No. 278.

I've been involved with Community Access Television, or PEG, for 30 years. First as a part-time employee, and for the past 8 years as the Community Access Coordinator at Southeastern Connecticut Television, Inc., or SEC-TV.

We are the Community Access Provider for 14 towns in Southeastern Connecticut.

The funding we receive from the cable companies under the current model is broken. Every year our funding is radically decreased while our overall expenses, even with a very frugal budget, increase.

At the operational end of Community Access Television, I've witnessed first-hand how the dwindling cable fee revenues in the past 3 decades have decimated what we can offer to our community.

In the early 1990s, we were able to fully fund a mobile TV production van, with 2 weekend employees, to record local high school varsity sports, of great interest to the local community. I covered over a hundred games in those years, professionally produced with a three-camera setup, three volunteers and two announcers.

We took our mobile van to New York City to cover two of the Military Base Closure hearings, of crucial interest to the local community, the Sub Base and EB are right here.

I can't imagine being able to fund even a few of those events at the current levels of income, even without a van. The money is just not there, it has vanished. We are in a death spiral.

Our budget for hiring part-timers for field shoots has decreased every year, from \$2,000 a year 3 years ago, to \$1,200, and then to \$600 dollars the past year. This paid to cover town meeting and events of interest to the community. Our ability to broadcast these is being essentially gutted.

Most of our programming is also available, on demand and for free, on the internet through web browsers and free apps.

Community Access Television fills a crucial and important information gap of local news, events and opinions. Newspaper coverage of these areas is decreasing, as we all know. Reporters and photographers have been laid off; our newspaper is getting thinner.

The large commercial TV stations don't have the resources to cover anything but the "big" stories, which are edited down to a few minutes. They don't cover local stories, meetings and opinions in depth.

We help bridge that crucial local information gap of coverage and depth, but our ability to do so is being severely diminished by the drop in funding.

I urge the Energy and Technology Committee to support Senate Bill 278.

Thank you for your time.